

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 OPR-02

/093 W

-----241543 028595 /43

R 241400Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9428

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COTONOU 0396

PARIS FOR MELONE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, DM

SUBJ: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT AFTERMATH: INTERNAL SECURITY

REF: A. COTONOU 328 (NOTAL), B. COTONOU 310

SUMMARY: WIDE-SCALE ARRESTS OF BENINESE TAKING PLACE.REPORTS
OF SPLITS WITHIN GPRB. END SUMMARY.

1. FIVE WEEKS AFTER JANUARY 16 DAWN ATTACK ON COTONOU, BENIN
REMAINS UNDER MARTIAL LAW. LAST WEEKEND (FEB 20/21) MARKED A
RESURGENCE IN SECURITY CHECKS ACCOMPANIED BY WIDE-SCALE ARRESTS
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OF BENINESE CITIZENS, PARTICULARLY OF FORMER CIVIL SERVANTS
IN PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS. ONE EUROPEAN IS CURRENTLY IN DETENTION,
FRENCH RESIDENT EMPLOYEE OF SOBETEX (PRINTED CLOTH FACTORY).
AS LAISSEZ-PASSERS ARE BEIN ISSUED BY IMMIGRATION SERVICE,
MOST NON-BENINESE RESIDENTS EXPERIENCE ONLY MINOR DIFFICULTIES
IN CIRCULATING, ALTHOUGH WHITES ON FOOT AFTER DARK ARE LIKELY
TO BE DETAINED OR ARRESTED BY NERVOUS SOLDIERS.

2. ARRESTS HAVE CENTERED ON FORMERLY PROMINENT BENINESE NOW IN RETIREMENT OR ENGAGED IN PRIVATE ENTERPRISE. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED RELIABLE REPORT THAT APPROXIMATELY 100 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN OUIDAH, INCLUDING THE HEADS OF MANY OF THE PROMINENT "BREZILIANO" FAMILIES IN RESIDENCE THERE (THE ELITE COMPOSED OF FREED SLAVES WHO RETURNED TO DAHOMEY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY). OTHER ARRESTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN ABOMEY AND DJOUGOU, TWO ALLEGED CENTERS OF ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY.

3. MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, CAPTAIN ISSIFOU BOURAIMA, IS REPORTEDLY UNDER HOUSE ARREST BUT ALLOWED TO WORK UNDER SURVEILLANCE. ALLEGATION WAS NOT DENIED BY DIRGEN OF MINISTRY (DGM) IN CONVERSATION WITH PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR. DGM SAID HE HIMSELF WAS UNDER SURVEILLANCE AND THAT HIS OWN HOME TELEPHONE HAD BEEN CUT OFF. (TELEPHONES OF ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS AND PERSONNEL AND MANY RESIDENT FOREIGNERS REMAIN CUT.) HEALTH MINISTER, WHO IS NOT PARTY MEMBER, SAID TO BE SUSPECT FOR HAVING FRENCH WIFE.

4. EMBASSY HAS ALSO HEARD RUMORS OF FRICTION AMONG GOVERNMENT MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN INTERIOR MINISTER AZONHIHO AND OTHERS. ACCORDING TO ONE STORY, PRINTED IN WEST AFRICA MAGAZINE, AND ALSO TOLD TO AMERICAN RESIDENT BY MINISTRY OF HEALTH OFFICIAL, FEUD EXISTS BETWEEN AZONHIHO AND FONMIN ALLADAYE, WHO ARE SAID TO HAVE COME TO BLOWS AT COUNCIL OF MINISTERS SESSION WEEK BEFORE JAN 16. ALLADAYE HAS BEEN IN COUNTRY ONLY BRIEFLY SINCE JAN 18. HIS PRESENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN. AZONHIHO, ALTHOUGH PLAINLY CIRCULATING IN COTONOU, CONFIDENTIAL

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DID NOT RE-EMERGE PUBLICLY UNTIL FEBRUARY 15 WHEN HE DELIVERED TWO SPEECHES INAUGURATING NEW SCHOOL YEAR. SECOND SPEECH, IN FON (LOCAL LANGUAGE), WAS MARKED BY VITRIOLIC ANTI-WHITE REMARKS, APPARENTLY A NOW-STANDARD TOPIC IN GPRB POST-COUP PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 COTONOU 0396

PARIS FOR MELONE

5. OTHER REPORTS OF INTRA-GOVERNMENTAL FRICTION WAS FOUND IN
HANDBILL PUBLISHED BY GROUP CALLING ITSELF "UNION OF COMMUNISTS
OF DAHOMEY." HANDBILL STATES , INTER ALIA, THAT AZONHIHO
INVOLVED IN FISTICUFFS WITH MINISTER OF YOUGH KOUYAMI,
MINISTER OF CIVIL SERVICE BIAOU, AND MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
AHONEYA. ACCORDING TO CIRCULAR, IN CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION
AZONHIHO WAS TKO'D BY PRESIDENT KEREKOU AND SUFFERED A BROKEN
CLAVICLE. EMBASSY TENDS TO DISCOUNT MUCH OF THIS REPORT SINCE
BROADSIDE DESIGNED TO SHOW "COUP" WAS STAGED BY GPRB. BENINESE
WE HAVE TALKED TO, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THERE IS SOME BASIS TO
RUMORS OF QUARRELS WITH AZONHIHO. EMBASSY NOTES
THAT BIAOU AND KOUYAMI ARE NOT MAKING PUBLIC APPEARANCES,AND
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IN CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF EXTREME DISTRUST, POSSIBILITY OF SECRET
GOVERNMENT SHAKUP IS NOT UNLIKELY.

6. GPRB HAS SUFFERED AT LEAST ONE IMPORTANT CASUALTY, ISSA
ABDOULAYE, PREFECT OF ATACORA PROVINCE AND MEMBER OF SEVEN-
MAN POLITICAL BUREAU OF PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE, WAS INVOLVED
IN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT ON OR ABOUT FEBRUARY 10 AND IS NOW
IN NATIONAL HOSPITAL IN CRITICAL CONDITION. ABDOULAYE IS
UNDER GUARD AND HIS WHEREABOUTS ARE BEING KEPT SECRET.

7. COMMENT: UPSHOT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IS THAT FOCUS OF
INTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS HAS SHIFTED FROM ARREST AND

IDENTITY CHECKS OF RESIDENT FOREIGNERS AND TOURISTS (I.E., WHITES) TO CRACKDOWN ON POTENTIAL BENINESE OPPONENTS OF REGIME. ALTHOUGH THE "WHITE MERCENARY" SCARE THEME HAS NOT BEEN DROPPED BY GPRB, THE "TRAITORS IN OUR MIDST" TACTIC IS THE OBJECT OF INCREASING ATTENTION. ATMOSPHERE OF MISTRUST AND FEAR, COMBINED WITH DISRUPTIVE EFFECTS OF "JOURNEE CONTINUE" (OFFICIAL HOURS 0700 TO 1400 FIVE DAYS A WEEK) HAS REDUCED GPRB (WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF SECURITY FORCES) TO A STATE OF NEAR PARALYSIS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT OVERTHROW, ARRESTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977COTONO00396
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770064-0577
Format: TEL
From: COTONOU
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770214/aaaaammo.tel
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Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 COTONOU 328, 77 COTONOU 310
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3244546
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BENIN COUP ATTEMPT AFTERMATH: INTERNAL SECURITY
TAGS: PINS, PINT, DM
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ba71c1bf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009